

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A developing method for ~~electrophotographic image for~~ developing an electrophotographic image by use of a developing device comprising a developing mechanism having a developer carrier for carrying a developer along a preset circulating route including a developing area and a developer restricting element for restricting the developer on the developer carrier, and a developer supply mechanism having storing means for the developer, wherein said developing method comprises the steps of:

using a start-up developer at an initial state of use of the developing mechanism; and

using a replenishing developer differed in grain size or grain size distribution from the start-up developer after an end of the initial state of use of the developing ~~mechanism.~~ mechanism, wherein, when number percentage of a fine powder component of 5  $\mu$ m or less in the start-up developer is Ndu and number percentage of a fine powder component of 5  $\mu$ m or less in the replenishing developer is Ntc, the grain size distributions of the start-up developer and replenishing developer satisfy the following relational expressions:

$$\text{Ndu} \leq 20.0\%, \text{ and } 20.0\% < \text{Ntc} \leq 25.0\%.$$

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~ A developing method for ~~photographic image~~ according to claim 1, developing an electrophotographic image by use of a developing device comprising a developing mechanism having a developer carrier for carrying a developer along a preset circulating route including a developing area and a developer restricting element for restricting the developer on the developer carrier, and a developer supply mechanism having storing means for the developer, wherein said developing method comprises the steps of:

using a start-up developer at an initial state of use of the developing mechanism; and

using a replenishing developer differed in grain size or grain size distribution from the start-up developer after an end of the initial state of use of the developing mechanism, wherein when volume percentage of a fine powder component of  $5\mu\text{m}$  or less in the start-up developer is  $V_{du}$  and volume percentage of a fine powder component of  $5\mu\text{m}$  or less in the replenishing developer is  $V_{tc}$ , the grain size distributions of the start-up developer and replenishing developer satisfy the following relational expressions:

$$V_{du} \leq 2.0\% \text{ and } 2.0\% < V_{tc} \leq 5.0\%.$$

4. (Currently Amended) The developing method for an electrophotographic image according to claim 1, wherein, when a volume average grain size of the start-up developer is  $DV_{du}$  and a volume average grain size of the replenishing developer  $DV_{tc}$ , the volume average grain sizes of the start-up developer and replenishing developer satisfy the following relational expressions:

$$0.3 \mu\text{m} \leq \cancel{DV_{du}} - DV_{du} - DV_{tc} \leq 1.2 \mu\text{m}, \text{ and } 7.5 \mu\text{m} \leq DV_{tc} \leq 8.5 \mu\text{m}.$$

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) The developing method for an electrophotographic image according to claim 1, wherein the developer is a nonmagnetic one-component developer, and the developing method is applied to a nonmagnetic one-component image developing device.

7-12. (Canceled)

13. (New) The developing method for an electrophotographic image according to claim 3, wherein, when a volume average grain size of the start-up developer is DVdu and a volume average grain size of the replenishing developer DVtc, the volume average grain sizes of the start-up developer and replenishing developer satisfy the following relational expressions:

$$0.3 \mu\text{m} \leq \text{DVdu} - \text{DVtc} \leq 1.2 \mu\text{m}, \text{ and } 7.5 \mu\text{m} \leq \text{DVtc} \leq 8.5 \mu\text{m}.$$

14. (New) The developing method for an electrophotographic image according to claim 3, wherein the developer is a nonmagnetic one-component developer, and the developing method is applied to a nonmagnetic one-component image developing device.